North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

at the start of the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting
2013-04-23

Good morning.

Today is an opportunity to further enhance transatlantic dialogue on a wide range of security issues facing NATO through and beyond 2014: continued turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa; the approaching 2013 milestone in Afghanistan; and developments in the Korean Peninsula.

This is also an opportunity to consult with our ISAF partners and to keep the momentum in our high-level dialogue with Russia.

We will start by assessing the developments in the Middle East and North Africa. We can all see that the situation in Syria is getting worse. And we cannot ignore the risks of a regional spill-over, with possible implications for Allied security. NATO has come to the support of Turkey with the rapid deployment of Patriots, but we must continue to remain vigilant.

We will also discuss North Korea’s provocative actions and threatening statements. They remain a serious challenge for regional and international stability and security. And the international community must send a strong and united message.

I expect we will also exchange views on the wider Middle East with the Russian foreign minister Lavrov within the NATO-Russia Council. This is part of our regular political dialogue.

And in our practical cooperation with Russia, we are making steady progress. Today, I expect we will agree to launch Phase Two of our Helicopter Maintenance Trust Fund, which will expand the training of Afghan maintenance crews. This would be a significant step.

And we will assess progress in our Afghan mission together with our ISAF partners. I expect we will endorse efforts to develop appropriate, coherent and effective funding for the Afghan forces after 2014. This will send a clear message of our commitment.

Our combat mission will be completed by the end of 2014, but we will remain committed to our partnership with Afghanistan.
With that, I’m happy to take a couple of questions.

Question Reuters :Can you tell us what you hope for from the trilateral meeting tomorrow between the Afghan President Karzai, and Pakistan and the United States. I also understand there has been an attack on the French embassy in Libya, do you have any comment on that please?

NATO Secretary General : On the latter I don't have any further information so at this stage I don't have a comment. On the trilateral talks, I commend all efforts to facilitate political processes. It goes without saying that if we are to ensure long term peace and stability in Afghanistan we also need a positive engagement of Afghanistan's neighbours including Pakistan. So I hope the trilateral talks can facilitate such engagement and such a political process.

Question Agence France Presse : Will you meet with President Karzai today at NATO or do you meet him tomorrow?

NATO Secretary General :Yes I would expect to meet President Karzai now that he is in town.

Question_ Agence France Presse_ Today at NATO, with the NATO Council?

NATO Secretary General : Today.

Question : Yesterday John Kerry said that the international community must be more firm face Bashar regime and also he speak about terrorism and he said that we must found new strategy to combat international terrorism, what do you think?

NATO Secretary General : On international terrorism?

Question : Also Bashar Assad regime.

NATO Secretary General : No doubt that we need a strong and unified message from the international community, a message that the regime in Damascus cant misunderstand. It's outrageous what we are witnessing in Syria. It's a real tragedy for the country, for the Syrian people, it's a risk for regional security and stability and the sooner the regime in Damascus realises that the only way forward is to accommodate the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, the better. To that end I think the international community needs to send a very clear and a unified message to the Syrian regime.

Question One TV Afghanistan : I have two questions sir. First about the peace talks in Afghanistan. We have been hearing for years about the peace talks in our country, but practically we don't have, we don't see any progress. What do think what are the reasons that we cannot become success in this peace process with the Taliban? And my second question is about the election in Afghanistan. In these days some movements happen by the government of Afghanistan to push the international community observer law to irrelevant, for example the new line my country disqualified the two representatives of the UN, from the IEC commission and also some commissioners come to IEC electoral commission that are pro-

President Karzai. Are you worried about these state movements being taken by the government of Afghanistan and what might be the role of the international community toward the next presidential election in Afghanistan?

NATO Secretary General : First on the reconciliation and peace process, I a m not going to guess about motives and intentions within the Taliban leadership. However, I commend all efforts to try and find a political settlement. But still I, there are certain conditions that must be fulfilled if a reconciliation and a political process is to be successful. Firstly that it is led by the Afghans. The Afghan government must be in the driver's seat. Secondly that groups and individuals involved in that process fully respect the democratic Afghan constitution, including full respect for human rights which of course also includes women's rights. And finally that Taliban and others involved in such a process must cut all links to terrorist groups. If these conditions are fulfilled I think we should give it a chance. Having said that I still think that the best way to facilitate the political process is to keep up the military pressure so that the enemies of Afghanistan clearly realise that they have no chance whatsoever to prevail in the battlefield and in that respect I am encouraged by the progress we have seen within the Afghan Security Forces. They are capable to take full responsibility for their security by the end of 2014. Now on the Afghan elections, let me stress that it is an Afghan responsibility to conduct those elections in such a way that they are credible and transparent. The international community is not going to interfere with the election process in Afghanistan. We can assist when it comes to security. We stand ready to assist the Afghan security forces. But first and foremost the political process is an Afghan responsibility and it is a responsibility for the Afghan Security Forces to ensure a secure environment. We stand ready to help if needed.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2013/04/23/doorstep-statement-by-nato-secretary-general-anders-fogh-rasmussen